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forces operating would tend both to enable us to deal more effectually, because more intelligently, with the mobilization of our human resources and to make the people of the country, appreciating these things at their true value, recognize the desirability of such mobilization, and coöperate even beyond the requirements of law in bringing all possible resources, both in human resources directly and in the utilities which human resources produce, to the support of our government in its struggle to maintain the liberties of mankind.

## SELF OWNING TOWNS

BY LAWSON PURDY,

General Director, The Charity Organization Society of the City of New York City.

Great Britain has spent about \$700,000,000 housing workers in Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> I came near saying workmen, but it is not—it is housing men and women and families as well as single men and single women. See the effect on the physical appearance of the workers of what Great Britain has done, and beside that see the spirit in which it is done and the moral effect upon those men and women working in those towns of the fact that those towns are theirs, built not by a private enterprise for them but by the state for them; and probably after the war is over in Great Britain those towns are going to be considered self owning towns. They are not going to be sold to separate owners and spoiled, but probably turned over to such societies as those that have built Letchworth and Hampstead and made coöperative towns. Perhaps they will be turned over to the municipalities that now under the British Legislation have certain powers of constructing dwellings and maintaining them for the people who live within those towns.

Under the circumstances that now confront us the United States must pay a very large share of the cost of what we do here, and, should the war continue as long as we think it may, the \$50,000,000 that is now proposed to be spent by the Labor Department, and the \$50,000,000 to be spent by the Shipping Board I hope is only a begin-

<sup>1</sup> For what Great Britain has done see some of the articles in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*.

ning. The United States proposes, generally speaking, to pay at least three-quarters of the expense of these new towns. It asks that local capital be provided for the balance. The money that the United States puts in will in time be paid back in part or in whole—probably only in part, because of the excessive cost of constructing buildings during the war. After the war that excess cost must be written off, but the balance will in time be paid back to the United States. The plan so far is that private capitalists shall be restricted as to dividends, probably 5 per cent, and that there shall be no profit in this enterprise for private capitalists. If that program is followed how easy it will be for us to carry out the same plan that is in the minds of those who built these British towns—that the workers living in the town shall in time be in part the controlling power of the town. After the United States has received its money back, there will be a large revenue in excess of that which is required, and that revenue can be spent for the benefit of those who live in the town. In England these self owning towns are generally rather complicated affairs. Financially they work well. I do not say “complicated” as a criticism of the plans, for the plans have worked and that is the test. The men who live there do not own individual houses; they own shares in the corporation that owns the whole. Here some of us have thought that the simpler plan would be for a corporation to own the whole and all the people have an interest, merely because they lived there, and the excess rentals spent for their benefit. So long as they are there they are to have a voting power, but they are free to move away.

The old-fashioned idea has been that it was desirable, in order that labor might be content and remain, that the laborers should own their own houses. Labor unions have generally thought otherwise—that it was not best for men who had only their labor to sell to be nailed down to one spot, and especially was this so in a one-industry town. If conditions did not suit them they were less free to leave their employment and move elsewhere, but if they owned their own houses they would sacrifice their all if they lost their job.

We must find a course that will make men who work contented and free at the same time. That result can be accomplished where so long as they live in any community they own their share of that community. Some of the great corporations have done their best and planned as wisely as they knew to found communities in which

men should be contented, in which they should have all of the material advantages and some of the joys of life, and very beautiful communities have been planned by some of the great corporations, intending that the individual workers should own their own homes. In spite of all that is being done, and much money has been spent in that way, the aggregate result remains comparatively small. There is a reluctance upon the part of the wage-workers to buy their own homes. Generally speaking, the ownership of homes in these towns built by great corporations is confined to the more highly paid men.

When a town is built over night, as some of these towns have in effect been built, there is a very large increment that comes merely because of the establishment of the community. Generally, these corporations that established such towns have been afraid to enter further than they were obliged to into the real estate business. They have sold off land as rapidly as they could, sometimes under well-planned restrictions and sometimes without them. They have not acquired more land than was absolutely necessary for their own plant and a small addition for homes for the workers. They have not planned to conserve for themselves the value that they had themselves created. In that, perhaps, they have acted wisely because of the conditions under which they were obliged to operate. In doing so, however, they have sacrificed much. Take the town of Gary. There was a stretch of barren sand, waste land, worth less than \$100 an acre. It cost the Steel Corporation more than that, of course, because people gradually got to know that the Steel Corporation wanted the land, and inevitably they paid a good deal more. But even when they had paid the excessive price, due to the fact that they wanted a large tract of land, the amount they paid was very small indeed compared to the present value of the town of Gary. A careful computation has shown that at present the value of land alone in the town of Gary is \$22,000,000 in excess of all that it cost the Steel Corporation, and in excess of all that the land was worth that was not owned by the Steel Corporation, and in excess of all that has been spent upon it in the way of streets and town development, exclusive of houses. If that \$22,000,000 of value had been conserved, the town of Gary could have twice and more than twice its present revenue spent for the benefit of that community. As it is, this value, created by the going there of the Steel Corporation and its employes, is frittered away to many people, very few of whom have to any considerable extent profited by it.

The town of Letchworth, England, was planned to be a town of about 35,000 people. It is about ten years old, and today has a population of 13,500. It was planned in advance. It was so planned that the suburbs of it should be agricultural and remain agricultural. It was so planned that it should conserve the health, happiness and contentment of all the people who are to live in it. It has been so successful that about thirty different industries are now established there. All the people who live there have an interest in the town itself and the value of the town.

All this is within our reach here for the benefit of the United States in mobilizing labor to win this war, and if we do it wisely we will have a moral and a spiritual value for all time after the war that we cannot possibly compute. One of the dangers that men see, one of the financial dangers of building a new town by the United States for one industry, is that when the war is over that industry is gone, and all the money that has been spent on the town is wasted. If the town is made a place in which men will like to live that danger ceases to exist. Where there are skilled, intelligent and contented men ready to work, there industries will go, and no town planned along the lines, physically, financially and socially, as these towns may be planned, will lack for industries when the war is over, and no industry will lack for labor that is intelligent and steady. The cost of turnover of labor that there was before the war in many of our great plants was enormous. It was not uncommon that in order to keep 100 men employed 500 or 600 had to be hired during the year. Since the war began it is not unusual that to keep 100 men employed 200 or 300 must be hired every month. Labor cannot be 50 per cent efficient, nor probably 30 per cent efficient, under such conditions. That was so before the war because labor was not satisfied, because men were not suitably housed, because they did not have the environment that made them part of it, because they did not have a home, and a home is not only a house—a home is everything that is involved in the idea of a community, with all its vital social interests, with all its education, its amusements and its social environment. These things make for solidarity for a real community. With such communities after the war we will have little to fear of financial loss and we will have a gain that is beyond all power of imagination.